

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A carrier assembly for a drive axle includes a pinion gear and ring gear that is operably coupled to a differential assembly. The differential assembly includes first and second case halves that are attached to each other. Each case half is supported by at least one bearing for rotation relative to a non-rotating axle housing. The ring gear comprises an outer circumference portion, which includes a plurality of ring gear teeth in meshing engagement with said pinion gear, and an inner circumference portion, which is fixed for rotation with the second case half about a differential case axis of rotation. The second differential case half includes a tubular portion that is coaxial with the differential case axis of rotation. The tubular defines a stop surface for the ring gear. The ring gear is constrained between the stop surface and one of the bearings to accommodate thrust loads.

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